



18th Battalion Association

Windsor and Detroit Branch

MEMORIES

How good is your memory? Do you remember the first Christmas Day (1915) we spent in Flanders?

Two of our Companies were in the M. & N. front line trenches while the other two Companies were in reserve at Ridgewood and Vierstraat, which were about a half mile apart. Both places were about a mile from the front line.

On Christmas morning, Jimmy Cork and I got up early as planned, dressed and left the dug-out quietly. When we got outside we found the day to be bright and clear but a little on the chilly side. We then went for a walk along the Ridgewood road and when we came to the Dickiebush swamp, we noticed it was covered by a low lying fog which gave it a white appearance and made it look larger than it was. We walked to the junction of Dickiebush but did not cross as there was an M.P. on duty there directing traffic.

When we returned to Ridgewood, old Davy Campbell and Bert Silk, the Company cooks, were just starting breakfast. We wished them both a Merry Christmas. Corkie then suggested to old Davy that the nicest Christmas present he could give the troops would be to show some improvement in his cooking. Davy told him where to go. After breakfast, most of us shaved and got cleaned up. We then visited around the camp. There was no place else to go.

We were later told that early that morning our Chaplain, Capt. Carlisle, and his batman had gone into the Front Line to hold a Communion Service for the officers and men who wished to attend. It was quite a setting for less than a hundred yards of No Man's Land separated us from a powerful enemy who knew he was also facing a powerful foe. On this day, however, both sides were honouring an unofficial cease fire as the Germans, like ourselves, and the rest of the Christian world, were celebrating the birth of an infant in a stable at Bethlehem.

After supper, some of us decided to go over to the small "Y" at Vierstraat. We went over by the path behind the woods which was quite muddy. We bought some chocolate, cookies, cigarettes, and other things we needed and then visited with some of the fellows who were in the other Company. Someone then suggested we should go over and see Jack Richardson who was then acting as C.S.M. Jack was in our platoon from the beginning so we all knew him well. He was glad to see us. Jack made some tea and we opened up some of the shortbread cookies we had just bought and sat gabbing until after midnight. We then decided to return by the La Brasserie. This road was usually under fire but the unofficial cease fire was still being observed. As we passed the La Brasserie, there were two ambulances taking out the sick and the wounded. When we got back to the dug-out, there was more gabbing, until someone suggested we should turn in and snuffed out the candle. As I lay in the darkness, I knew that some of the others were wondering as I was how many more Christmas days, we would spend away from home. It was a long, long day.